

Taste and See at Crossways Church Fellowship

Health and Safety Policy

1. Introduction and Statement of Intent

Taste and See is a church-run community project based in Halstead, delivered by trained volunteers, which provides free, inclusive, meal-based activities for individuals, families, parents, carers, and children. The project is committed to ensuring the health, safety, and wellbeing of all participants, volunteers, and visitors at all times.

Taste and See recognises it's duty of care under health and safety legislation and good practice guidance. We aim to provide a safe, welcoming, and supportive environment in which people can connect, eat, and build community without fear of harm. Health and safety considerations are embedded into all planning, delivery, and review of activities.

This policy outlines how Taste and See identifies and manages risks associated with its activities, particularly where volunteers are involved and where vulnerable adults and children may be present.

2. Project Overview and Purpose

Taste and See delivers two community meal initiatives in Halstead:

- **Luncheons** – free, simple, nutritious meals for individuals who may be living alone, alongside time for conversation, companionship, and the development of community connections.
- **Stay and Play** – free meals and relaxed activities for parents, carers, and children, particularly during school holidays when many other groups are unavailable.

All sessions are delivered by trained volunteers and held at **the Halstead British Legion**, a well-established, accessible community venue.

The project particularly supports people experiencing loneliness, financial pressure, reduced wellbeing, or isolation, creating safe spaces where individuals and families can feel welcomed, supported, and valued.

3. Need for the Work

The need for Taste and See has increased significantly due to the loss and reduction of local services in Halstead. The closure of the Halstead Day Centre in 2025 removed a key point of connection for older residents. Other services, including Toastie Tuesday at the United Reformed Church, Soul Food meals run by Anglican churches, and library coffee sessions, have either reduced capacity or ceased entirely.

This has left a clear gap in provision for people living alone and at risk of isolation. Families have also been affected, particularly during school holidays when many affordable and inclusive activities are unavailable. Feedback from attendees highlights both emotional and financial pressures, with Taste and See helping reduce loneliness, support wellbeing, and create meaningful social connections.

Given the vulnerabilities faced by many attendees, maintaining strong health and safety practices is essential to the safe delivery of this work.

4. Responsibilities

Project Leadership

- Overall responsibility for health and safety within Taste and See.
- Ensures that volunteers receive appropriate induction and training.
- Reviews health and safety arrangements regularly.

Volunteers

- Follow this Health and Safety Policy and any related procedures.
- Take reasonable care of their own safety and that of others.
- Report any hazards, concerns, incidents, or near misses promptly.
- Act in an inclusive, considerate, and non-judgemental manner.

Venue Responsibilities

- The Halstead British Legion is responsible for maintaining the safety of the premises, including fire safety systems, building access, and general maintenance.
 - Taste and See works in cooperation with the venue's own health and safety procedures.
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5. Risk Assessment and Management

Taste and See undertakes risk assessments for its activities, which are reviewed regularly and updated as needed. Key risks and controls include:

- **Slips, trips, and falls** – Ensuring clear walkways, tidy layouts, and immediate clean-up of spills.
 - **Food safety** – Safe food handling, awareness of allergens, and clear communication with attendees.
 - **Fire safety** – Awareness of fire exits, evacuation procedures, and assembly points.
 - **First aid** – A basic first aid kit is available at sessions and volunteers are aware of emergency procedures.
 - **Crowd and space management** – Managing room layout to ensure safe movement for adults, children, buggies, and mobility aids.
 - **Emotional wellbeing** – Volunteers are trained to be alert to signs of distress and to respond calmly and sensitively.
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6. Safeguarding and Vulnerable Participants

Taste and See recognises that many attendees may be vulnerable due to age, bereavement, mental health challenges, or family circumstances. Although safeguarding is covered by a separate policy, health and safety practices align closely with safeguarding responsibilities.

- Volunteers are mindful of safeguarding boundaries at all times.
- Any concerns about a participant's wellbeing are taken seriously and responded to appropriately.
- Where necessary, volunteers signpost individuals or families to relevant local support services.

7. Volunteer Training and Support

All Taste and See volunteers receive:

- An induction covering health and safety expectations.
- Guidance on food hygiene, safeguarding awareness, and inclusive practice.
- Ongoing support and opportunities to raise concerns or suggestions.

Volunteers are never expected to work beyond their level of training or comfort and are encouraged to ask for help when needed.

8. Incident Reporting

Any accidents, incidents, or near misses are reported to the project leadership as soon as possible and recorded appropriately. Serious incidents are responded to immediately and, where necessary, escalated in line with venue procedures and legal requirements.

9. Monitoring and Review

This Health and Safety Policy is reviewed annually or sooner if there are changes to activities, venues, or legislation. Feedback from volunteers and participants is welcomed and used to improve safety and practice.

10. Conclusion

Taste and See is committed to providing a safe, welcoming, and supportive environment for all who attend. By combining clear health and safety procedures with a compassionate, volunteer-led approach, the project ensures that individuals and families can benefit from shared meals, connection, and community in a setting that prioritises wellbeing and dignity.